

Prajñā Pāramitā

IX. CHAPTER 9: THE PERFECTION OF WISDOM

A. THREE KINDS OF BENEFIT AND PATH ADORNMENT FROM WISDOM

How does the bodhisattva go about cultivating wisdom? If wisdom is cultivated for the sake of bringing about self-benefit, benefit of others, and the combined benefit of both, one becomes able thereby to adorn the path to bodhi.

1. RIGHT MOTIVATION IN THE PRACTICE OF WISDOM

In his cultivation of wisdom, the bodhisattva is motivated by a wish to so train and discipline beings that they are caused to abandon suffering and affliction.

One who cultivates wisdom studies all aspects of worldly phenomena, abandons covetousness, hatred, and delusion, establishes himself in the mind of kindness, pities and benefits all beings, constantly bears in mind extricating and rescuing beings, serves as a guide for beings, and is able to distinguish and explain what constitutes the right path, what constitutes the erroneous path, and what constitutes the karmic retribution linked to good and bad karmic actions. This is what qualifies as the mind of wisdom as initially cultivated by the bodhisattva.

2. SELF-BENEFIT

On account of cultivating wisdom, one separates far from ignorance, rids oneself of the affliction-based obstacles (*kleśa-āvaraṇa*), and rids oneself of the obstacles to cognition (*jñeya-āvaraṇa*). This is what is meant by “self-benefit.”

3. BENEFIT OF OTHERS

One teaches and transforms beings in a manner whereby they are caused to become trained and disciplined. This is what is meant by “benefit of others.”

4. COMBINED BENEFIT

On the basis of that advancement towards the unsurpassed bodhi which one has already cultivated, one teaches beings, thus causing them to gain benefit identical to one’s own. This is what is meant by “combined benefit.”

5. ADORNING THE PATH OF BODHI THROUGH WISDOM

On account of cultivating wisdom, one gains the first [bodhisattva]

ground and so forth until one reaches the *sarvajñā* wisdom [of omniscience]. This is what is meant by “adorning the path to bodhi.”

B. TWENTY TYPES OF MIND KEY TO A BODHISATTVĀ'S WISDOM REALIZATION

In the bodhisattva's cultivation of wisdom, there are twenty kinds of mind through which he is able to gradually bring about its establishment. What are those twenty? One must generate:

1. The mind which, with wholesome motivation, seeks to draw personally close to the good spiritual guide.
2. The mind which abandons arrogance and refrains from negligence.
3. The mind which complies with teachings and delights in listening to the Dharma.
4. The mind which remains insatiable in listening to Dharma while also skillfully contemplating its meaning.
5. The mind which practices the four *brahma-vihāras* (the four immeasurable minds) and cultivates right wisdom.
6. The mind which courses in “the reflection on the unlovely” (*aśubha-saṃjñā*) and thereby generates renunciation.
7. The mind which contemplates the four truths and sixteen mind states of the ārya [in gaining “the path of seeing.”]
8. The mind which contemplates the twelve causes and conditions and cultivates the [three] clarities and wisdoms.
9. The mind which listens to [teachings on] the *pāramitās* and remains mindful and zealous in cultivating them.
10. The mind which contemplates impermanence, suffering, non-self, and quiescent cessation.
11. The mind which contemplates emptiness, signlessness, wishlessness, and effortlessness.
12. The mind which contemplates the abundant faults and vulnerabilities to misfortune inhering in the aggregates, sense realms, and sense bases.
13. The mind which conquers and subdues the afflictions, and recognizes that they are not one's friends.
14. The mind which guards all good dharmas and recognizes that they are one's friends.
15. The mind which suppresses and controls bad dharmas and causes them to be cut off.

16. The mind which cultivates right Dharma and causes it to increase and become widespread.
17. The mind which, although it cultivates [dharmas held in common with] the Two Vehicles, constantly relinquishes and abandons [allegiance to those vehicles themselves].
18. The mind which listens to [teachings from] the treasury of bodhisattva scriptures and delights in upholding them in practice.
19. The mind which, in benefiting self and others, acquiesces in the increasing development of all forms of good karmic deeds.
20. The mind which upholds the genuine practices and seeks out all dharmas of the Buddha.

C. TEN DHARMAS OF SKILLFUL CONTEMPLATION EXCLUSIVE TO BODHISATTVAS

Furthermore, in the bodhisattva's cultivation of wisdom, there are ten additional "dharmas of skillful contemplative thought" which are not held in common with the Hearer disciples or the Pratyekabuddhas. What are those ten? They consist of:

1. The contemplation and distinguishing of the roots of meditative absorption and wisdom.
2. The contemplation of [the faults inhering in] failing to relinquish the two extreme views of annihilationism and eternalism.
3. The contemplation of the dharmas involved in production arising through causes and conditions.
4. The contemplation of the non-existence of a being, a self, a person, or a life.
5. The contemplation of the non-existence of the dharmas of the three periods of time, whether past, future, or abiding [in the present].
6. The contemplation of the nonexistence of any implementation of action even while [the efficacy of] cause-and-effect is still not cut off.
7. The contemplation of the emptiness of dharmas while still not desisting from planting [the karmic "seeds" of] good deeds.
8. The contemplation of signlessness while still continuing to bring beings across to liberation without any deterioration

in those efforts.

9. The contemplation of wishlessness while still not abandoning the quest for bodhi.
10. The contemplation of effortlessness while still not forsaking the taking on of physical bodies [to carry out the bodhisattva's endeavors].

D. THE BODHISATTVA'S TWELVE-FOLD SKILLFUL ENTRY OF DHARMA GATEWAYS

Furthermore, the bodhisattva has an additional twelve skillful entries into Dharma gateways. What are those twelve? They are:

1. He skillfully enters the samādhis of emptiness, [signlessness, wishlessness], and so forth and yet refrains from opting to take up their complete realization.
2. He skillfully enters the dhyāna samādhis and yet does not acquiesce in taking rebirth in the dhyāna [heavens].
3. He skillfully enters the spiritual penetrations and knowledges and yet does not take up final realization of the dharma of transcending outflow impurities.
4. He skillfully enters the dharmas of inwardly-directed contemplation, yet avoids realization of the "right and definite position" (*samyaktva-niyāma*) [of the arhat which would force him into a too-early nirvāṇa].
5. He skillfully enters the contemplation of all beings as empty and quiescently still and yet still does not relinquish the great kindness.
6. He skillfully contemplates all beings as devoid of self and yet does not relinquish the great compassion.
7. He skillfully enters rebirth amidst the wretched destinies and yet it is never on account of any karmic deeds that he is therefore reborn there.
8. He skillfully enters the abandonment of desire and yet he does not take up complete realization of the dharmas by which desire is entirely abandoned.
9. He skillfully enters the renunciation of bliss associated with desire and yet does not renounce Dharma bliss.
10. He skillfully enters the relinquishing of the ideations characteristic of all frivolous discourse and yet he still does not relinquish the contemplations which are consonant with skillful means.

11. He skillfully enters the contemplation of the many faults and misfortunes inherent in conditioned dharmas and yet he still does not abandon the realm of conditioned [dharmas].
12. He skillfully enters the purity and far-reaching transcendence of unconditioned dharmas and yet he still does not take up residence in the unconditioned.

E. THE BODHISATTVA'S CONTEMPLATION OF THE THREE PERIODS OF TIME

Even while the bodhisattva is able to engage in cultivating all good gateways into the Dharma, he is simultaneously able to well comprehend that the three periods of time are empty and devoid of inherent existence]. Where one [successfully] carries out this contemplation, it is through the power of that wisdom which contemplates the emptiness of the three periods of time. In a case where one dedicates to unexcelled bodhi [the merit from rejoicing in and emulating] all of the incalculable merit created by all buddhas of the three periods of time, this qualifies as the bodhisattva's skillful means in well contemplating the three periods of time.

Additionally, although one perceives that those dharmas of the past which have already come to an end do not extend into the future, still, one constantly cultivates goodness, remaining vigorous and refraining from desisting. One contemplates that although the dharmas of the future have no production by which they come into existence, still, one does not relinquish one's practice of vigor and vows to go forth toward bodhi. One contemplates that, although the dharmas of the present are newly destroyed in each successive thought-moment, still, one's mind refrains from neglecting them and thus one nonetheless sets out toward bodhi. This is what is meant by the bodhisattva's skillful means in contemplating the three periods of time.

As for what is in the past, it has already been destroyed. As for what is in the future, it has not yet arrived. As for what is in the present, it does not abide. Although one contemplates in this manner the production, destruction, scattering, and demolition of mind dharmas and dharmas belonging to the mind, one nonetheless remains constant in not relinquishing the accumulation of roots of goodness and the accumulation of dharmas assisting realization of bodhi. This is what is meant by the bodhisattva's skillful means in contemplating the three periods of time.

F. SUMMATION ON THE BODHISATTVA'S WISDOM-BASED CONTEMPLATION

Additionally, the bodhisattva contemplates all [dharmas]: good and not good, self and non-self, real and unreal, empty and non-empty, worldly truth and ultimate truth, right meditative absorption and wrong meditative absorption, the conditioned and the unconditioned, outflow-impurities and absence of outflow-impurities, "black" dharmas and "white" dharmas, birth-and-death and nirvāṇa—he contemplates them all as being like the very nature of the Dharma realm, as being of but a singular characteristic, [that is to say], as being signless. Among all of these, there does not exist any dharma known as "signlessness," nor does there exist any inherently-existent dharma which might be deemed signless. This then qualifies as the imprint of all dharmas, the indestructible imprint. Even within this "imprint" there is no characteristic of any "imprint." This constitutes the *prajñā pāramitā* as manifest in the skillful means arising from genuine wisdom.

The bodhisattva, *mahāsattva* should train in this manner and should practice in this manner. One who practices in this manner straightaway draws close to *anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi*.

G. THE ESSENCE OF THE BODHISATTVA'S PERFECTION OF WISDOM

Even as the bodhisattva, *mahāsattva* cultivates wisdom, his mind remains free of anything being practiced, this because the very nature of dharmas is itself pure. This then constitutes the basis by which one perfects *prajñā pāramitā*.